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ABSTRACT

These guidelines were designed for teachers, school administrators, parents, and students to aid their investigation and selection of foreign excursion programs. There are hundreds of travel programs available to high school and college students. Some provide formal education; some include living with a host family, while others feature guided tours and extensive travel through several countries. The guidelines consist of statements that can be rated according to the organization and operation of a foreign excursion program. Statements deal with program sponsor and features, excursion goals, leaders and instructors, selection of participants, orientation, excursion activities, conclusion of the excursion, and post-trip participant activities. The statements form a basis for investigating the foreign excursion programs by suggesting questions to be asked and information to be gathered. (RM)

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NCSS TRAVEL STUDY GUIDELINES

Developed by

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NCSS International Activities Committee

Adopted by

NCSS Board of Directors

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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines were designed for teachers, school administrators, parents, and students to aid their investigation and selection of foreign excursion programs. There are hundreds of travel programs available to high school and college students, sponsored by educational, religious, civic and fraternal groups, and commercial agencies. Some provide formal education; some include living with a host family and immerse participants in one culture, while others feature guided tours and extensive travel through several countries comparing cultures. No two programs are exactly alike, nor is every one compatible with the interests and background of every traveler. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in determining your requirements and selecting a program which is best.

In its Curriculum Guidelines, NCSS endorses programs that include analysis and resolution of global issues, intensive cross-cultural study, participation in the real social world, engaging students directly and actively in the learning process, drawing upon many kinds of resource persons, and promoting growth through organized experiences. Organized foreign travel and study programs provide many of the key educational elements that NCSS believes are essential for the health of our democratic system and the preparation of young people living in our increasingly diverse nation and interdependent world.

We hope these Travel Study Guidelines contribute to the selection and planning of an experience that is both enjoyable and educational.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES

The Guidelines consist of a series of statements concerning the organization and operation of a foreign excursion program. To use this tool effectively, a thorough review of program literature is required as well as discussions with the sponsors, organizers, group leaders, and even previous participants, if available. The Guidelines aid in program selection, form a basis for the investigation, and will suggest questions to be asked and information to be gathered.

Once you have completed your investigation, react to each of the statements, circling the number which most accurately reflects your judgment about the program feature described. Use the following to aid in marking the responses:

1 - The feature is present in the program to a very satisfactory extent.

2 - The feature is present, but is only satisfactory or marginally acceptable.

3 - The feature is present but unsatisfactory, or it is not a regular program feature.

After responding to each statement, review the results. An effective program that provides a safe, secure, and educational experience will merit "1" for a majority of the statements. Review those which were rated "3" to determine if they represent a situation that would jeopardize the safety and security of the participants, or would diminish the benefits expected from foreign travel and study. For example, many programs do not offer academic credit or provide it only as an optional feature at an additional cost. The absence of this feature is not necessarily detrimental to program effectiveness, and if you are not interested in earning credit, a "3" for these statements will not be an important deciding factor.

Using the Guidelines as described will contribute to a more effective program selection, which complements the participant, and enhances the excursion experience.

THE PROGRAM: SPONSOR AND FEATURES

1 2 3 The program has been conducted previously and has the support and endorsement of former participants.

1 2 3 The experience of the sponsor/operator is sufficient to indicate that program features will be provided as advertised.

1 2 3 The sponsor/operator maintains a security bond substantial enough to insure the financial liabilities to be incurred.

1 2 3 The transportation, accommodations, and tours are arranged through reputable U.S. and/or foreign carriers and agents.

1 2 3 Provisions are made for attending to medical and other emergencies which may arise during the excursion.

1 2 3 A sufficient number of excursion leaders are provided to effectively accommodate the number being accepted for the program.

1 2 3 Assurances of cooperation are secured from the foreign governments, educational agencies, etc. involved with the program.

1 2 3 A formal program of study is included which offers the participants high school or college academic credit.

1 2 3 Academic credit being offered will be granted by an accredited U.S. educational institution.

1 2 3 All expenses and fees are clearly itemized in the promotional literature.

1 2 3 The literature clearly identifies those expenses that are not included in the fee and must be paid by the participants.

1 2 3 The schedule, itinerary, and program format are clearly described in the promotional literature.

1 2 3 Overseas accommodations are identified and described in the literature.

1 2 3 All overseas travel arrangements are identified and described in the literature.

1 2 3 The format and content of the educational portions of the excursion are clearly described.

EXCURSION GOALS

1 2 3 There is a clearly defined statement of program goals presented in the promotional literature.

1 2 3 The program goals are consistent with the sponsor/operator's ability to provide them.

1 2 3 The nature of the scheduled activities and itinerary indicate that the program goals will be achieved.

1 2 3 The content and methods of the educational portion are consistent with stated program goals.

LEADERS AND INSTRUCTORS

1 2 3 The excursion leaders have been selected based on their experience and knowledge of the cultures and countries to be visited.

1 2 3 Excursion leaders include people of varied skills and talents, such as accredited instructors, professional tour guides, and people from the host countries.

1 2 3 Excursion leaders and instructors are fluent in the native languages of the participants and the areas to be visited.

1 2 3 Instructors possess appropriate knowledge and experience to effectively conduct the educational portion of the program.

1 2 3 Instructors are capable of working effectively with Americans who are visiting foreign cultures and countries.

1 2 3 When academic credit is offered, the instructors possess the appropriate credentials and academic qualifications and are recognized by the institution granting the credit.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

1 2 3 The program has specific criteria for selecting participants, and these include appropriate academic background and life experiences.

1 2 3 The promotional methods used are likely to attract participants whose interests and qualifications are compatible with the program.

1 2 3 Applicants are required to submit evidence that they satisfy the criteria for acceptance, such as personal data, references, and a statement of interests and goals for participating in the program.

1 2 3 For programs including an extended stay, participants are required to demonstrate or develop some proficiency in the language of the host culture.

1 2 3 The number of excursion leaders required to insure a safe and effective program determines the number of applicants accepted.

ORIENTATION

1 2 3 Participants are provided with printed materials that describe the itinerary, general travel and customs information, and other pertinent travel requirements and restrictions.

1 2 3 Specialized materials are provided, such as background readings, maps, and a bibliography to prepare participants for the cultures and countries to be visited.

1 2 3 For the education portion of the excursion, participants are given a required reading list, books and other materials.

1 2 3 Other forms of orientation, such as pre-departure lectures, discussions, and methods for investigating another culture are provided.

1 2 3 Instruction in the language of the host culture is provided as part of the pre-departure orientation.

1 2 3 Additional orientation and introductory sessions are planned for each new phase of the program, such as entering a new country.

EXCURSION ACTIVITIES

1 2 3 A wide variety of activities are planned which allow for broad exposure to the host culture(s), such as guided tours, opportunities to meet or live with people of the area and attend cultural events and popular entertainment.

1 2 3 Participants have the opportunity to pursue their personal interests to the extent that is feasible.

1 2 3 Time and suggestions are provided for informal and spontaneous contacts with people of the host areas.

1 2 3 The itinerary allows for contact with a broad spectrum of society, in addition to those whose interests and backgrounds are similar to the participants.

1 2 3 The excursion activities are designed to achieve the maximum cultural and educational benefit from the time spent and the people encountered.

CONCLUDING THE EXCURSION

1 2 3 Participants are given the opportunity to reflect on their experience, to analyze it, and to learn from it through group discussions, personal diaries, and the like.

1 2 3 Activities such as written reports, oral presentations, or evaluations are required to complete the educational portion of the program and earn academic credit if offered.

UTILIZING THE PARTICIPANTS

1 2 3 The participants are expected to share the benefits of their experience through presentations to school and community groups, written reports, news articles, or local radio or television interviews.

1 2 3 The sponsor/operator requests that the participants evaluate the program and make suggestions.

1 2 3 After returning, program participants are asked to assist with orientation sessions for other groups or to take leadership roles in future excursions.